



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Sept. 14, 2005 (05-40)  
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## West Nile virus found in Thurston County horse

**OLYMPIA** – West Nile virus has been confirmed in a 19-year-old quarter horse in Thurston County, the state Department of Agriculture announced today (Sept. 14). The horse, which has been euthanized, started showing signs of central nervous system problems shortly after arriving here from California two weeks ago. California is experiencing an ongoing outbreak of West Nile virus (WNV) this year affecting more than 340 horses.

The positive test results were reported late Tuesday by the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Pullman.

The mare was vaccinated in February for West Nile virus.

“Although the vaccines are not a 100 percent guarantee, they are an excellent way to help prevent West Nile virus,” said Dr. Leonard Eldridge, state veterinarian. The vaccine requires two doses three to six weeks apart, and immunity will not be achieved until five weeks after the second vaccine. An annual booster shot should be considered prior to the start of the mosquito season.

West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito and can infect people, horses, many types of birds, and other animals. Humans cannot contract West Nile through contact with an infected horse and infected horses do not spread the disease. Mosquitoes get infected when they feed on an infected bird.

West Nile virus affects horses, mules, donkeys, and other equines much more often than other domestic animals. Most horses do not become ill and show no symptoms at all. Those that do become ill show signs such as loss of coordination, loss of appetite, confusion, fever, stiffness and muscle weakness, particularly in the hindquarters. About one-third of horses that become ill die.

Veterinarians and horse owners should report potential cases of West Nile virus in horses by calling the State Veterinarian’s Office at (360) 902-1878.

The threat of WNV can be minimized by controlling mosquitoes and preventing horses from being exposed to adult mosquitoes.

More WNV information is available on the following Web sites:

Department of Agriculture, [agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth/Diseases/WestNileVirus/default.htm](http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth/Diseases/WestNileVirus/default.htm)

Department of Health, [www.doh.wa.gov/WNV](http://www.doh.wa.gov/WNV)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/issues\\_archive/wnv/wnv.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/issues_archive/wnv/wnv.html)

Washington State University, <http://www.wnv.wsu.edu>

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